

Jan. 29 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the National Energy Policy Development Group and an Exchange With Reporters
January 29, 2001

The President. This is the first in a series of meetings which will be chaired by Vice President Cheney on discussing our Nation's energy situation—can't think of a better man to run it than the Vice President.

I've also asked, and he has asked, that senior members of the Cabinet participate. This is a matter of high concern for this administration, because it's a matter of high concern for our Nation. It's becoming very clear to the country that demand is outstripping supply, that there are more users of electricity and natural gas than there is new units being found, and we've got to do something about that in the country.

This administration is concerned about the people who work for a living, concerned about people who struggle every day to get ahead. And we understand—fully understand—what high energy costs can mean to people in America, and we're going to formulate a strategy to deal with it. And the Vice President's going to head the task force to report back to me, and to the Nation, how best to cope with high energy prices and how best to cope with reliance upon foreign oil, how best to encourage the development of pipelines and power-generating capacity in the country so that we can help our fellow citizens.

We have been dealing with this issue, obviously, because of the State of California's woes. And I appreciate very much the way you handled it, Mr. Secretary. The Governor of California asked for a 2 week extension of mandatory sales of power and

natural gas. We've granted that extension for 2 weeks. It looks like they're making progress in California, and we're pleased, because the situation is going to be best remedied in California by Californians.

We're very aware in this administration that the situation in California is beginning to affect neighboring States. Western Governors came to see the Vice President, and they came to see me, as well. And they're deeply concerned about the situation spreading beyond the California borders, and so are we. And so the task force that's being assembled will not only deal with the very shortrun issues dealing with the West but, obviously, the longer term issues that will be confronting our country for a while, unless we're willing to act boldly and swiftly, which we will do.

Thank you for coming.

Super Bowl XXXV

Q. [Inaudible]—questions?

The President. Next time. Give you a chance to really think of some good ones. *[Laughter]* I've got some suggestions—I've got some suggestions. First answer—you can think of the question—first answer is, Ravens. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham and Gov. Gray Davis of California. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.